

Russia and The United States:

A Shared History of Figure Skating and Potential for Healing

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Russia and The United States have a turbulent history. Starting from the Revolution of 1921, the relationship between the two nations has been complex at best, leading to a Cold War and countless proxy wars in the Middle East. The reality is that the relationship between the two has continued to worsen, and to many, it does feel as if we are stuck in another Cold War. Anxiety is high, and if you ask any politician, one of the highest points of concern regarding foreign policy is Russia. Realistically speaking, it is imperative that an attempt at fixing relations is essential for the United States as a nation, especially if we want to avoid getting involved with a direct or indirect war with Russia. It is not hard to see that such a conflict would quickly become a world war.

Relationships between two countries with such animosity between them are never simple to fix, as the nature of politics makes it far too complicated. Particularly in the case of Russia, much of our conflict with them branches from many different areas, including humanitarian injustice, oil conflicts in the Middle East, economic problems, and opposing political ideologies. This brings up the question: what can be done to improve the relationship between two countries that are very opposed to each other?

Sports are used often in politics, and many of our most significant sporting events, such as the Olympics, are incredible shows of peace and unity. Although different countries may be competing with each other, it is all on an equal field, with the whole world watching as people worldwide participate in the games. Russia and the United States often go head to head, particularly in winter sports. In particular, figure skating is one of the most-watched sports during the Winter Olympics, and it is a sport dominated by Russian and American athletes. Looking at past figure skating events, I was reminded of my own experiences as a young competitive skater. It was prevalent, and still is very common, for Russian skaters and coaches to

come to the United States, and vice versa, for training. I had done quite a few training sessions with a well-known Russian coach in my town of Dennis, Massachusetts. This got me thinking about figure skating in general and how Russian skaters and American skaters interacted. More often than not, these interactions were more positive than negative in my experience.

Oddly enough, the more I began to look into it, the more I realized that Russia and America have a long history of sharing skaters and coaches in figure skating. Despite the competition between the two nations, the relationship between the two nations seemed far more civil within the figure skating world than outside of it. So what was it that made figure skating different from other sports, and why was it that Russia and America had such a positive relationship in figure skating in particular? This question, I realized, would not only answer why figure skating was so unique as a competitive sport, but it would also open up a potential alleyway for civil conversation between Russia and America. Is it possible to use that positivity to improve the overall relationship between the two nations, even if only slightly? And what exactly would that look like?

Chapter 1- History of Figure Skating

First and foremost, it is crucial to take an in-depth look at the history of figure skating in both countries and what makes skating such a unique sport compared to other competitive sports.

There is no official date as to when figure skating started; however, it is believed that in 1772 a man by the name of Robert Jones was the first documented figure skater. Albeit Jones's figure skating was nothing like the current sport we know and love today.¹ The more modern form of figure skating came about from an American skater by the name of Jackson Haines. His skating was based on his training as a ballet dancer, breaking free from the more rigid styles that had been previously practiced. He won the figure skating championship in 1864 and, along with that, provided a new standard for figure skating.

Jackson Haines's style of figure skating did not do well in the United States. He reportedly went to Europe, where his figure skating was more well-received, soon causing it to be dubbed the International Style. He is now considered one of the fathers of modern figure skating, having invented some of the most well-known current moves such as the sit-spin, a spin in which a skater must spin whilst in a seated position, one leg stretched outward.² Haines's apprentice, a Canadian named Louis Rubenstein, furthered the development of modern figure skating by working to create a formal organization of figure skating within the United States and Canada. Anyone who is a figure skater today will know how vital the United States Figure Skating Association, founded in 1921, is to modern competition. Rubenstein's efforts helped create what would become the USFSA. Alongside that, Rubenstein helped create a standard for skating competitions, incorporating a scoring system that accounted for both technical skill and

¹ "Recent Trends and Changes." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

² "Jackson Haines." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 9 Apr. 2021.

difficulty along with scoring for artistry and fluidity. This helped to further legitimize the sport, and made it easier for skaters to compete. Rubenstein also helped to develop the test system which determines the level at which skaters compete. In order to compete at a certain rank, skaters are required to demonstrate increasing levels of skill through sets of moves before a judge from the USFSA who in turn, have to go through certification to judge these tests. Often they are associated with certain skating clubs which fall under USFSA's jurisdiction. This, however, just applies to the United States. Although the tests and scoring system changed over time to fit with new developments in figure skating, the standard tests are an essential part of the sport.

Outside of the United States, there is the ISU, the International Skating Union. The ISU was founded in 1892 in the Netherlands. This union oversees all international competitions regarding skating, including speed skating alongside figure skating. Today, the ISU is in charge of the Grand Prix competitions in which over 50 nations worldwide participate, setting the standard for the biggest competition, the Olympics.

In Russia, however, the history of figure skating is far older than in America. Skating has existed for thousands of years, particularly in areas where much of the year is cold. Although different than the figure skating we know today, ice skating was used as a recreational activity, as well as a way to get around during the winter months when ice was frequent. The oldest skate that has been discovered was in Finland from over 4,000 years ago.³ Though it is not completely understood if skates were used for entertainment or more practical purposes back then, it is clear that ice skating has played a role in Northern Europe for many years.

³ Bellis, Mary. "The History of Ice and Figure Skating." ThoughtCo, Aug. 26, 2020.

Russia is where the modern skate was created. Tsar Peter I was thought to be the inventor of the contemporary skate, creating a boot with a blade at the bottom, which allowed for more freedom in movement than the previous wooden skates had allowed for. The St. Petersburg Society of Amateur Skating, which would later have a significant role in the development of figure skating in Russia, was created. At the rink of the Yusupov Garden in 1896, the first world championship in figure skating took place.⁴ Alongside this, it was in Russia where the concepts of 'figures' really took form. Figures in skating are the use of edges and movement to create designs on the ice. An example of this would be the classic figure eight, in which using a single push from one's blade, one would go around in a circle on one edge in order to showcase not only one's ability to create momentum and speed, but also to showcase your ability to use one's edges on one's skate properly. In modern-day figure skating, figures were one of the most important aspects of one's testing. However, in July of 1990, figures were replaced with 'moves in the field,' which, although similar to figures, is more complex and integrated into competition differently. Moves in the field include moves such as twizzles, or the act of twirling in tightly wound circles on one edge of one's blade across the ice. Whilst figures are no longer included in competition, they are often still taught to aid with other aspects of figure skating, such as certain moves in the field. For example, the classic figure eight mentioned early is still utilized in moves in the field, though simplified so that one would use all four edges within one's single figure eight, opposed to utilizing only two throughout the figure eight as was done in figures. This change was worldwide, and as such, it affected the look of figure skating in both Russia and the United States.

⁴ "Russian Figure Skating History." *Russian Culture*, 12 Dec. 2015.

Regardless of whether or not figures are used in competition now, its creation cemented Russia as an essential leader in figure skating and would set it up to continue to be an influence on international figure skating competitions. The name, "Figure Skating," comes from figures, showing how significant figures were to the sport from the start. Skating in Russia came almost naturally, as a nation filled with ice and snow and a country known for having a highly esteemed national ballet company. Russian culture, which includes many great names within the arts, created a strong love for figure skating, combining both physical and visual art. Many traditional figure skating songs come from ballet, which originated from Russian composers such as Tchaikovsky. Perhaps one of the most used pieces of music in figure skating is the score from *Swan Lake*, initially composed by Tchaikovsky. The combination of the love for the arts, intense cultural significance, and the climate of Russia itself quickly resulted in Russia becoming the figure skating powerhouse it is known as today.

Both the United States and Russia have been highly influential in the start of figure skating as a sport. As two of the biggest nations in modern-day figure skating with over a hundred medals won,⁵ it is only natural that there has thus been a build-up of competition between the two. Before going into the nature of the relationship between the Russian skate team and the US skate team, it is essential to talk about the role of the Olympics in politics overall.

It may not seem at first glance that sports have a significant impact on politics. We often associate sports with entertainment on a global scale. As it is, "Working for peace is now one of the core aims of Olympism, enshrined in the second 'fundamental principle' of the Olympic Charter: 'The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the development of man, with a

⁵ "List of Olympic Medalists in Figure Skating." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 29 Apr. 2021.

view to promoting the establishment of a peaceful society.”⁶ Inherently, it is the current goal of the Olympics to promote peace amongst the different countries of the world. As such, how the Olympics are performed is acknowledged to have real-world effects on political situations worldwide.

International competitions are also significant on a political level. Soft politics are often overlooked by many when analyzing political issues. This is an unfortunate oversight, as soft politics have the potential to be incredibly influential, shaping the preference of other parties through appeal rather than force. A recent example would be the 2008 Olympic games. Questions were brought up regarding China’s participation in the games due to the potential inhumane treatment of Tibet and supporting governments, such as the governments in Sudan and Burma, who are known for breaching human rights.⁷ While China’s treatment of Tibet has not changed, the opportunity to put their human rights record on display for the world could have been used as leverage for the international community to change their policies. That is to say, even in the modern-day, the Olympics are incredibly politically charged and are particularly influential in regards to political change.

Perhaps one of the most infamous examples of soft politics on the larger world scale would be the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. The Berlin Olympic games took place during the height of Nazi power in Germany, and it has become infamous for being one of the more controversial Olympic games to date. “The 1936 Olympics were held in a tense, politically charged atmosphere. The Nazi Party had risen to power in 1933, two years after Berlin was awarded the Games, and its racist policies led to international debate about a boycott of the

⁶Golden, Mark. “War and Peace in the Ancient and Modern Olympics.” *Greece & Rome*, vol. 58, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1–13.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Games."⁸ Naturally, the Olympic Committee made public statements that nobody would be excluded from the games, particularly noting Jewish people to be included as Nazi Germany was well known for discrimination against Jewish people. That did not mean that this did not have a negative impact on Nazi Germany, as there was a great deal of backlash against allowing Germany to host the Olympics. These calls against the games were akin to public calls against Nazi Germany itself.

Whilst historically we are able to look back and say that the Nazi Party was planning to dominate the rest of Europe, and eventually, the world, it was still important that Germany be recognized as a respectable nation. It also proved that there were growing tensions between other European countries and Germany several years before World War II officially started. Although not a direct cause of the war, the reaction to Nazi Germany hosting the summer Olympics had an undeniable connection to the political atmosphere in Europe and the world during 1936. "The Olympic Games in 1936 were a climax of power and international influence for the Nazis, because Germany presented itself as a peace-loving, open-minded, and tolerant country,"⁹ Essentially, as Hilmes suggests in his novel, the Olympics were a great show of diplomacy and an attempt to improve their image in the world. Clearly, it did work to some extent, particularly with America.

When the United States officially entered into World War II in 1941, it was not because of Germany. It was because of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁰ Of course, the Olympics of 1936 had little to do with what would be the eventual catalyst for the United States joining the war,

⁸ "Berlin 1936 Olympic Games." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

⁹ Hilmes, Berlin 1936.

¹⁰ "Take A Closer Look: America Goes to War: The National WWII Museum: New Orleans." *The National WWII Museum | New Orleans*.

and it did make Nazi Germany appear better in the eyes of the United States. The US government had been aware of the systemic discrimination against Jewish peoples in Germany during the years before the Olympics, hence why there was public concern over Germany hosting them. However, due to Germany's reaction to that concern and the use of their 'Token Jewish athlete,' Germany was able to avoid creating larger conflict with the United States. Ultimately, by appealing to the United States' concerns during the Olympic games, the Nazi party set Germany up to be on better terms with the US knowing very well that they were planning war against some of the United State's allies at the time. It is also important to note that the US was considered one of the strongest military powers globally during this period, so avoiding conflict through the Olympics did help soften relations ever so slightly between the two nations.

The Olympics of 1936 are only one example of how soft political moves can significantly impact the relationship between countries. The FIFA World Cup is another worldwide sports event that is often known for having political importance. Perhaps one of the easiest examples to take from FIFA's decision to hold the 2022 games in Qatar. To briefly sum it up, many have concerns regarding Qatar's hosting of the 2022 games due to the political climate there currently and several concerns about human rights violations. Politics play a huge role in this particular controversy regarding the 2022 FIFA games. The decision to keep the games there or move them will impact Qatar's future political relations with others, and as such there will then be pressure to change their inside policies to address the human rights violations in order to maintain good relations with others as well as a good image globally.

It is important to note that within these two examples, the most significant contention point is the location of where the event is happening, not necessarily the sport itself or the country that has success at said event. Attending a global event in another country is a statement

of temporary peace. It shows good faith between the countries and is one of the few times where countries meet on truly equal ground to compete fair and square. The Olympics have become a staple of the show of peace today. However, one of the main issues with these events is that there is competition. Competition is a fundamental part of any sporting event. Particularly in the Olympics or FIFA, and similar events, winning a medal for your country brings great pride to your homeland. It can even become a bragging point and create competition between nations who have won multiple medals in the same sport. As one can imagine, one of those sports where there is such a conflict, is figure skating. Russia and the United States have held many different titles in figure skating, and today they are very much considered rivals in the sport. It is no surprise considering that the US and Russia also have tensions outside of the sports arena. Yet there is something very unique about figure skating in particular compared to other sports that make it particularly good for soft politics: It is an art form.

Chapter 2- Brief Political History and Current Politics

The United States and Russia have a short, albeit complicated political history together. Although Russia has been around for hundreds of years, The United States is a relatively new country. The differences between the two countries' political policies are why the United States and Russia have opposed each other for such a long period of time.

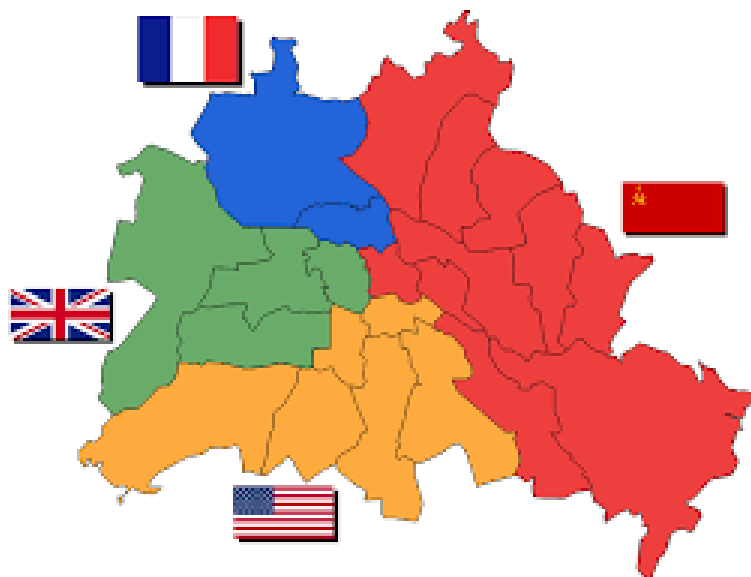
The political tensions between the United States and Russia began to rise around World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1917, the October Revolution took place in Russia. The Bolshevik party, at the time one of two pro-Marxism and pro-communist parties in Russia, took to the streets of Saint Petersburg, then called Petrograd. Tensions between the people and the Tsarist regime grew due to famine, extreme poverty, and lack of educational and job opportunities. The tension finally came to a head in February of 1917, when the Tsarist government was officially overthrown. A provisional government was set up in its place, although it did not last. The October Revolution was the take over of the provisional government by the Bolshevik party. However, the revolution was not peaceful. The Bolsheviks took over the provisional government by force, using their growing military support to force themselves into power. The Bolshevik revolution was not just accepted throughout Russia, however. The country withdrew from World War 1 through the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, in which Russia gave up valuable land in Ukraine to Germany in exchange for peace. Outrage due to the treaty caused a further divide between different political parties in Russia, including between the Bolsheviks and their less extreme counterparts, the Mensheviks. This is the division that would come to spur the era of violence, the Red Terror, in Russia.

The Russian civil war was brutal, with an estimated 300,000 Russians on both sides dying¹¹. Like any civil war, the fighting between the Red Army and the White Army caused great destruction across Russia. However, the Red Army was destined to win the fight, and soon the Soviet Union was put into power with Vladimir Lenin as the head of the union. The civil war, however, was more than just a turning point in Russian history; but it was also a turning point in regards to foreign policy and relations. In particular for the relationship between the United States and Russia. During the civil war, the United States sent resources and soldiers to the White Army. This was a direct statement against the Bolshevik party, and would become a point of contention between the USSR and the United States as the United States was the only nation to send in troops to aid the White Army. The bold motions of the United States to fight against the communist regime would forever scar the relationship between the two nations.

During World War II, the Soviet Union and the United States had a small break from tensions thanks to defeating Nazi Germany. The United States and the USSR fought on the same side, against Nazi Germany, together during this time, though they did fight on separate fronts. the United States sent aid over to the USSR when possible to help with the war effort against Nazi Germany. At the end of the war, however, conflict once again arose between the two nations. This tension manifested itself in the infamous split of Berlin. When Germany fell, the territories that had formerly belonged to the Germans were split up between the Allied forces. In particular, until a new government was set up, Berlin was split between the West and the East, with West Berlin being controlled by France, the United States, and England. East Berlin was under the control of the Soviet Union, and from this, the conflict between the USSR and the US

¹¹ *Russian Civil War - Aftermath - Casualties.*
www.liquisearch.com/russian_civil_war/aftermath/casualties.

came to a near boil. Due to disagreement in how they wished to set up the new government in Germany and to write up treaties to reassign land after the devastation of World War II, the Cold War began.



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As the name suggests, the Cold War was not a war in which there was active fighting between the two nations. However, the lack of direct violence does not mean that there were no tensions between the USA and the USSR. It is not a surprise that the cold war ended up taking place, especially considering that the USSR was highly anti-capitalist in ideology. At the same time, the United States was highly anti-communist in doctrine. "The orthodox American view, as originally set forth by the American government and as reaffirmed until recently by most American scholars, has been that the Cold War was the brave and essential response of free men to communist aggression."¹³ In his essay "Origins of the Cold War," Arthur Schlesinger explains for what reasons the Cold war came to pass. Historically "The Kremlin, on the other hand,

¹² Complex01. "Berlin Blockade." *File:Berlin Blockade-Map.svg*, 11 Sept. 2007.

¹³ Schlesinger, Arthur. "Origins of the Cold War." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1967, pp. 22–52. JSTOR.

thought only of spheres of interest; above all, the Russians were determined to protect their frontiers, and especially their border to the west, crossed so often and so bloodily in the dark course of their history."¹⁴ However, this was not the case for the USSR, whose main goal was to expand the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and expand the impact of communism. With those conflicting ideologies and with both countries wanting to spread their ideology to others, tension grew over the newly reorganized political landscape of Europe and beyond¹⁵. However, this is a topic of constant debate amongst scholars of the cold war era, as author Michael F. Hopkins states in his essay. "They [scholars such as Hubert Feis who served for the United States during the conflict] blamed the expansionist urges of the Soviet leader, Josef Stalin, suggesting that he was guided by a communist ideology which favored the spread of the communist message."¹⁶ Though it is essential to acknowledge that the origins are debated¹⁷, the more critical aspect of the Cold War is the long-lasting political effect on both nations and how the Cold War shaped the relations between the United States and Russia.

One of the scariest parts of the Cold War between the US and Russia was the ever-looming threat of physical conflict. That was seen through the surplus of proxy wars. The most prevalent of those proxy wars were in Vietnam, Korea, and the Middle East. In summary, although the Russians and the US never came into direct conflict with each other; they did fight through conflicts in other countries, such as the conflict in the Middle East. The United States would attempt to support and put a democratic government in areas where fighting was already taking place, and the USSR would take the side of more communistic governments and

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "BOLSHEVIKS: ORIGIN, IDEOLOGY AND LEADERS - SCIENCE." *Warbletoncouncil*.

¹⁶ Hopkins, Michael F. "Continuing Debate and New Approaches in Cold War History." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2007, pp. 913–934. *JSTOR*.

¹⁷ Pineo, Ronn. "Recent Cold War Studies." *The History Teacher*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2003, pp. 79–86. *JSTOR*.

ideologies. Guns, supplies, and training were given to each side by their respective supporters, and the result was devastating. It is no question that the Middle East, in particular, was decimated by the ongoing conflicts between these groups.

The conflict in the Middle East is complicated; however, it is essential to mention and go over as it continues to affect foreign politics to this day, particularly between the United States and Russia. I will briefly go over the different conflicts and suggest how that continues to impact the relationship between Russia and the United States presently.

In the most simplified language, the Middle Eastern conflict is based on a move for Israel to become an independent and Jewish nation. Surrounding countries, however, do not support this, and from that, a violent conflict broke out. "In November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to recommend the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. The two states were to be joined in an economic union, and the United Nations would administer Jerusalem. The Arabs would get 43 percent of the land, the Jews 57 percent. The proposed apportionment should be assessed in light of the following facts: The Jewish portion was better land; by the end of 1947, the percentage of Palestine purchased by Jews was less than 7 percent; Jewish land purchases accounted for only 10 percent of the proposed Jewish state; and Jews made up less than one-third of the population of Palestine. Moreover, the Jewish state was to include 497,000 Arabs, who would constitute just under 50 percent of the new state's population."¹⁸

Unfortunately, this conflict has continued to rage in the Middle East, and there has not been a peaceful end to it. However, part of the importance of this conflict was how it ended up

¹⁸ Senior Editor Sheldon L. Richman, "Ancient History: U.S. Conduct in the Middle East Since World War II and the Folly Of Intervention", Cato Policy Analysis No. 159, CATO Institute, August 16, 1991.

being the perfect proxy war for the Russian's and United States governments to fight against each other. "Russian ties to the Middle East go back centuries and provide a valuable foundation on which to build. From its quest for warm water ports and access to the Mediterranean in the eighteenth century to its policy of protecting fellow Orthodox Christians living in Ottoman lands in the nineteenth century, Russia historically has been a factor in Middle Eastern politics and geopolitics. After the fall of colonial powers in World War II, Russia courted new Arab states. It has long been a major supplier of arms to many countries in the region,"¹⁹ the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace website explains. Russia historically has had a long going relationship with the Middle East, and the USSR did have territory within the Middle East such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.



¹⁹ Eugene Rumer, Andrew S. Weiss. "A Brief Guide to Russia's Return to the Middle East." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

²⁰ Golbez. "Soviet Union Map 1944-09-19 to 1944-10-11." *File:Soviet Union Map 1944-09-19 to 1944-10-11.Png*, <https://commons.wikimedia.org>, 11 July 2016.

The conflict of interest within the Middle East between the United States and USSR and later Russia continued to shape the relationship as time went on. Even as 2020 came around, both countries continued to have soldiers and interest in the Middle East on opposing sides.

In addition, President Biden made a somewhat controversial comment during an ABC interview. He stated that Russia would pay for interfering with the elections in the United States and agreeing to the interviewer that Putin was a killer. Naturally, this caused immediate backlash from Russia. The Kremlin released a statement saying that nothing like that had ever been said before, and "[Peskov, the Russian press secretary] said it was clear that Biden "definitely does not want to improve relations" with Russia and that the relationship between the two countries is "very bad." When asked how it can affect relations, Peskov said "it is absolutely clear how," but refused to elaborate."²¹ according to an article by CNN. If not tense previously, it does seem that there is tension between the US and Russian governments. Although it cannot be said for certain, it would not be out of the realm of possibility to say that we have entered into another cold war with Russia.

That tension, as well as the fear of war on the horizon, is precisely why soft politics are fundamental to utilize right now. Our relationship with Russia is broken, and it is going to take baby steps to try and mend it once again. Though what I am proposing will not entirely fix the situation, it will alleviate some of the tensions between the citizens of the United States and Russia and show that the two countries can work together in an act of goodwill. It would show that the United States wants to improve relations and vice versa, which would allow a more open dialogue on how to better fix our relationship.

²¹ Picheta, Rob. "Russia Reacts Angrily after Biden Calls Putin a 'Killer'." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 18 Mar. 2021.

Chapter 3- The Art of Figure Skating

Figure skating is a highly competitive sport, holstering some of the world's most famous athletes, such as Nathan Chen from the United States and Evgeni Plushenko of Russia. Figure skating is a unique sport that integrates intense athletic ability and artist talent to create beautiful programs. Whilst physically impressive, a good skate program can move one to tears, make one jump to your feet in excitement, and make one want to dance. Perhaps my favorite example of moving a figure skating program can be Jason Brown's performance of Riverdance in 2014. The energy in the stadium is undeniable when one watches the video of his performance, and the amount of joy and energy that his performance created is memorable. Much like a flawlessly performed ballet dance, figure skating has intense emotions behind it that can be experienced by all who watch it.²²

"I just try to touch people's hearts in a way through skating, so they're not just witnessing a performance, they're feeling a performance, and they're a part of it."²³ explains US medalist Scott Hamilton when asked about his thoughts on figure skating. He is well known for his beautifully emotional skates. This quote embodies what makes figure skating such an incredibly unique sport. It is not just a performance for the skater, but it is a performance for everyone to experience and be a part of. The energy in skating rinks during performances is infectious, much like a football game or basketball game but with added layers of complexity. These layers are part of what drew me to figure skating to start: it is an emotionally charged sport. Aside from the

²² "2014 US National Championships Jason Brown FS Riverdance" *Youtube*. Uploaded by Blaine Alison Clark, March 31, 2016.

²³ "Scott Hamilton Quotes." *BrainyQuote.com*. BrainyMedia Inc, 2021.

dance-like movements, which I will be getting into more detail about later on, figure skating's main appeal is in the form of two different types of art: Physical and Visual. The physical art of figure skating comes from the skating itself and then the presentation of the skater. Much like ballet, figure skating highlights beautiful costuming, makeup, and hair to complete the story. It adds an extra dimension to the storytelling of the skater and aids in creating a stunning spectacle. Skating costumes are often handmade for the skater and their program, particularly at the international level. They are well known for being incredibly colorful and sparkly, with intricate patterns and designs. Some skating costumes even transform into entirely different costumes, a trick that is very popular in Theater on Ice and skating shows. Of course, there is a lot of significance that follows in a costume for a skater.

To go a bit into the history of the skating costume, it is essential to note that they have



changed significantly over time. The original skating²⁴costumes for women were much longer and covered more, though they were still flashy. However, to comply with what was considered appropriate wear at the time, skirts often went below the knee, and a minimum amount of skin was shown. Of course, the costumes still had to be wearable. "During World War Two and the 1940s, there was a fabric shortage, so skating dress hemlines became shorter and shorter"²⁵ creating a look that we are far more familiar with

²⁴ Photo by Tatiana Dorokhova Photography. Imagine depicting me in my home made figure skating dress.

²⁵ Farris, Jo Ann Schneider. "Figure Skating Clothes Through History." *LiveAbout*.

today. This became the classic figure skating costume for women, and it maintains popularity to this day. However, one main difference between modern costuming and the costuming of the 40s, 50s, and 60s was the collar. Skating dresses almost always had turtlenecks collars to ensure coverage and often were not just one piece like they are today, but two pieces that were secured together. During the 60s, one-piece skating dresses became the most common type of skating dress. More colorful dresses were becoming popular along with one-piece skating dresses, and additional flair and sparkle were beginning to catch on. From this point on, skating costumes became more and more artistic and different, with each dress holding its own special qualities and unique design.

In modern-day skating competitions, the costumes are critical. Although they do not affect the score of one's program, they are often a topic of conversation amongst skating fans. Iconic skating dresses can even make it into the mainstream media, and usually, they take part in high fashion. Today Jan Longmire is known as one of the most famous figure skating dress designers, and she has created dresses for Olympic skaters such as Ashley Golden. An additional big name in the skating fashion world is Vera Wang, who is typically known for designing fashion for the runway. A figure skater's costume is significant, as any skater would know. Not only does it enhance the performance and help tell a story, however, if anything goes wrong with the outfit, but it could also mean disaster for the skater. A single sequin that falls off on the ice could cause great injury, and in some cases, even disqualification. If your strap breaks, your whole performance and program are then put at risk. It is a serious matter, and sewing these skating costumes is not only costly but incredibly difficult.

Figure skating outfits are often made of spandex and mesh, two materials that I can say from experience are not easy to work with. Though other materials can be used to create a

skating outfit, the best available must be used, particularly in the international competitive scene. Much like high fashion and the runway, there is an art to creating a costume for a figure skater. Many skaters will pay out thousands of dollars for a single dress to be made for them, and the designers have the responsibility to create something fitting and beautiful. It is important to note that not all skaters depend on outside designers to create their outfits.

It is widespread for skaters, or their family and friends, to create the dress, or at the very least to design the dress themselves. "There's also so-freaking-cute couple Madison Chock and Evan Bates who design all of their costumes. Chock even creates costumes for other skaters, according to Get Up. 'I would love to be a fashion designer or involved in the fashion world,' Chock told NBC Olympics.com when asked what she would be doing if she was not an athlete."²⁶ Chock certainly is not the only one who enjoys creating their costume. Johnny Weir is famous for his extravagant and sometimes strange outfits, and he designs each one. It is a part of the art that goes into figure skating, and the outfit helps complete the show you are creating. For each figure skater, it is different, of course. I know from when I was competing, it was not uncommon for skaters to pay others to make their costumes, whilst some of the girls I skated with would personally make theirs or have help from their coach creating the perfect costume. Regardless, the pageantry of figure skating is an essential part of the sport today, and it adds to the art of the presentation.

As mentioned above, figure skating involves multiple areas of art, including music. Music is such an important part of a figure skaters' performance. Without the music, you do not have a complete program, and there are no competitions where someone would skate without

²⁶ Shannon-Karasik, Caroline. "There Are Some Familiar Designers Responsible For The US Olympic Ice Skating Costumes." *Romper*, Romper, 8 Feb. 2018.

music. Music has become, to put it simply, essential to figure skating as a sport. It is far more challenging to skate without music to aid in one's movements. In skating, one moves with the sound, and it becomes almost a part of oneself as one moves across the ice. Not only does the music help the audience enjoy the program, but it gives the program meaning and life for all participating in it. Without music, without sound, there simply is no figure skating.

It is important to note that each skater is likely to use different types of music with that in mind. Much like dance, one can skate to almost anything one would want to. Each figure skater has a different style of skating. Ashley Golden is known for her graceful yet powerful skating, whilst Skaters like Johnny Weir are known for their theatrics in skating. My personal favorite figure skater, Jason Brown, is known for the sheer artistry of his performances, creating an illusion of the music following alongside him whilst he skates. That being said, often, music is not explicitly designed for a program (though that is not to say people do not do that at all). Figure skaters go through a process to find a piece of music that they want to skate to. More often than not, this decision is made by the coach and skater alike, although not always. As is the reality for art, it usually depends on who one is speaking to and how they make such important decisions.

Classically, figure skating music was very similar to music featured in ballet. The music would be a traditional and classic piece of music that skaters would pick, such as Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, and from there, a program would be created. For a long time in figure skating, one could not compete with music that featured vocals, although this rule changed as the sport grew in popularity and importance. In modern figure skating, it is common to see a mix of both instrumental and vocal pieces of music being performed. Numbers from musicals and music from all different genres have also had a rise in popularity in the figure skating world.

Historically, music has been an essential part of a figure skating program. Though traditional music used to be used more commonly, it is not uncommon today to see a wide variety of different music worldwide. This is particularly applicable to showcase programs, which are outside of the competitive realm. A personal favorite of mine is when Russian figure skater Evgenia Medvedeva performed a program using the music from the popular anime *Sailor Moon*, being one of the first Olympic level skaters to skate to music created for an anime. *Stars On Ice* also used music to develop in-depth and entertaining performances using popular music. Notably, in 2019, they skated to all 90s music, leading to a delightful array of programs that features many different hits from that time.

What music a skater picks for their program often can depend upon where they are from. For instance, Russian figure skaters are more likely to pick classical music from Russian composers to skate to. Naturally there are instances in which a skater picks a piece of music that is unexpected, or far different from what is considered normal. Yet it is often the case that the music being picked is important to the skater, as well as to their country of origin. There is a great deal of pride in winning international competitions, and that pride reflects not only oneself, but one's country as well. To win a skating competition using a piece of music from one's own country adds to that pride. It makes a stronger statement of: we won this, completely and entirely. The music choice is also one of the more direct ways to connect with one's audience, and as such it is an important decision as your impact on the audience plays a direct role in how well one does in competition.

Outside of just being influential in figure skating's reach to the audience, the chosen music dictates what the program in itself is going to look like in the end. As stated previously, the skater should skate with the music. The choreography that takes place caters to the specific

piece of music and the necessary moves that must be completed in the realm of competition. This is where Ice Dancing came from, a form of figure skating that focuses on the dance aspects of figure skating instead of the more traditional jumps and spins. Regardless of what type of skating you are participating in, your music is essential to your skating. Some figure skaters even have pieces created uniquely for them, adding further to the sheer creativity that goes into creating a successful figure skating program.

The next logical question would be, of course, how popular is figure skating in modern media? This question is essential and a critical aspect of why figure skating above other sports should be considered for soft political action. As mentioned above, figure skating has a unique position as a very artistic sport, which does not necessarily need to be competitive. whilst that is important, it is also important to explore whether figure skating impacts the average person in the United States and Russia.

An excellent place to start is to take a look at the movies made about figure skating. Sport movies in the United States are popular, with the classic tale of the underdog rising above expectations and winning whatever competition they may be competing in. Although skating is not your typical sport, there are quite a few featured films that focus on a figure skater. "Blades of Glory" is one notable film from 2007. Directed by William Speck and Josh Gordon, "Blades of Glory" received a 70% on Rotten Tomatoes. Though a comedy, "Blades of Glory" has made itself a part of figure skating history. It was one of the first films to come out featuring figure skating, and as such, it introduced the sport to many who would not have otherwise known of it. Another popular film is "Ice Princess," which was directed by Tim Fywell. "Ice Princess" brought figure skating to the young adult/teen movie scene and quickly became popular.

Although the film only received a 52% on Rotten Tomatoes, it still made 24.4 Million dollars at the box office.

One of the strong points of American-made films is that they tend to be wildly popular worldwide. What may be successful in the United States is not necessarily what is successful abroad; it does mean that there is access to American films even in Russia. Particularly in modern times, where the internet has created faster, almost instantaneous media availability from across the globe. However, that is not to say that Russia does not have its share of popular figure skating films. "Ice," a Russian-produced romantic drama, became so popular that it was shown in theaters across Europe and China. The film, which came out in 2018, was a huge success and made over 20 million dollars within the first year of its release, an impressive feat.

It is not only Russia and the United States that creates prevalent media surrounding figure skating. In 2016, an anime by the name of Yuri!!! On Ice came out of the animation studio MAPPA. Directed and written by Sayo Yamamoto, Yuri!!! On Ice took the anime scene by storm, quickly becoming one of the top animes of the year. According to Crunchyroll's annual anime awards, Yuri!!! On ice came at the best anime of the year, as well as the most popular. The most crucial part of Yuri!!! On Ice, however, was not just that it was extremely popular in Japan, but that it became popular worldwide. In the United States alone, it became one of the most popular animes of the year. Yuri!!! On ice became a highly influential anime and introduced figure skating to a much wider audience. The anime itself, though an animation, is exceptionally well done. The animation was beautiful, the figure skating depicted was accurate, and it became such a phenomenon that even Olympic-level figure skaters, such as Johnny Weir, announced their love for the anime. Regardless of the sheer popularity of this anime outside of those who enjoy anime, figure skating is incredibly popular.

Of course, those examples are only successful examples of widely popular skating media. Like any type of movie, not everyone is going to enjoy watching figure skating. That being said, it is quite clear that figure skating appeals to a large audience worldwide and can be consumed in the mainstream media. Of course, as someone who is deeply involved with the world of figure skating, it is hard to imagine a world without it. However, there are people in the United States and Russia that have minimal knowledge of figure skating, if any at all. One does not need to know much about figure skating to enjoy watching it. Shows and movies such as Yuri!!! On Ice and Blades of Glory show that even without knowledge of the sport, one can still immensely enjoy watching it. Whilst not entirely mainstream, figure skating is the type of sport that can be wildly enjoyed across a multitude of different audiences without much prior knowledge.

Chapter 4- Alternatives to Competition

Figure skating's nature makes it a perfect sport for something one does not often see: exhibition. Skating for pure amusement, without any competition, is quite common. Many shows throughout the United States focus on the showmanship of figure skating alone. A great example of this would be Stars on Ice, an exhibition where the United State's best figure skaters go around the country and perform together for fun. There is no competition, and as someone who has been to one of these shows, I can say it is truly a fun experience. The skaters, who typically are in fierce competition against each other, come together to create something entertaining and entirely different from your regular skating competition. "Stars on Ice has proven to be the world's premier figure skating tour, presenting Olympic and World champions to its fans across the globe."²⁷ according to the Stars on Ice website when talking about the history of the event. It is a delight for fans of figure skating to watch their favorites skate together to create a wonderfully entertaining performance without any of the tension of competition. Suggested initially by Scott Hamilton and Robert D. Kain, Stars on Ice has been going strong since its founding in 1984, only not touring in 2020 due to the coronavirus global pandemic.

Stars on Ice creates a unique opportunity for figure skaters to come together and create a fun show without competition. Applying this idea to a more global scale could have a massive impact on Russia and the United States in particular. The United States predicted that over 100,000 people would attend the championships in 2020 before getting canceled due to

²⁷ "Tour History." *Stars On Ice*.

COVID-19.²⁸ These numbers for a non-major sporting event are huge, and that only counted those planning to participate in the event in person. Figure skating historically is one of the most-watched winter sports during the winter Olympics. It is easy to say that there is a large audience for figure skating. In combination with the ideas behind Stars on Ice, the United States could use such a program to improve the public image of the US in Russia, and vice versa. Figure skating could improve relations between the two countries without risk of competitive aggression or sore feelings over scoring.

There are several other examples in which Russian athletes have come over to the United States in order to work together instead of competing. Perhaps the most important is when Russian players were first introduced into the National Hockey League. In 1994 the first Russian hockey player was given the Hart Trophy, and in the same year the Stanley Cup was broadcasted in Russia. During the 1900s as well, there was an influx of Russian players who came to the United States in order to train, as funding in Russia decreased significantly. Thus, it would not be the first time that Russian and American competitive skaters worked together on the ice.

Aside from actual competitors coming together to create an ice show, there are several other touring shows that embrace the theatrics behind the sport. A few examples of this would be Theater on Ice, Disney on Ice, and charity events around the holidays featuring well-known figure skaters. Disney on Ice, however, is perhaps the most famous out of all of those examples and yet again shows an essential aspect of figure skating: it is more than just a sport.

Disney on Ice was created by Walt Disney himself back in 1949 when the Ice Capades, a well-known figure skating group at the time, performed Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

²⁸ Bates, Brandon. "More than 100,000 Fans Expected for 2020 Figure Skating Championships in Greensboro." *WXII*, WXII, 18 Jan. 2020.

Disney historically has had a great interest in winter sports, and skating has been featured in many of his classic animations, such as Oswald the Lucky Rabbit in 1928 and Bambi in 1942. It is an understatement to say that figure skating is not a large part of the Disney franchise, whether it be through animations, movies, or even Disney on Ice itself. Disney on Ice is of particular interest regarding this subject as a form of strictly performance figure skating, without competitive standards or rankings. Perhaps the most important aspect of Disney on Ice, particularly in regards to performance, is that it is a well-known example of how figure skating can be enjoyed by all audiences, not just those who have an interest in skating, to begin with.

The targeted audience for Disney on Ice is children from the ages four and up; however, it is enjoyed by both adults and children alike.²⁹ Especially within the last few years, the audiences who have grown up with Disney-related media are still very much enthralled with the world of Disney, even without children. Thus, Disney on Ice provides a unique opportunity for all ages to enjoy the world of Disney and enjoy ice skating that uses the plots of beloved movies such as *Beauty and the Beast* or *Frozen* to create an entertaining show. Particularly in modern days as well, Disney has a large influence worldwide, including in Russia. There is even a Disneyland in Moscow now, which was built in 2019. Though recently opened, it goes to show that Disney's influence and adoration is widespread enough to condone the building of a huge amusement park in one of Russia's largest cities. All of that comes down to the fact that Disney on Ice is appealing to both American and Russian audiences and could very well be used as a model for what this type of skating show could look like.

Perhaps the more obvious advantage of Disney on Ice as a concept is that it goes through stories that are well known globally. You are going to be hard-pressed to find someone who has

²⁹ "What Does It Take?" *Disney on Ice*, 12 Aug. 2020.

never heard of Anna and Elsa, the two sisters from Frozen. "Let it Go," the song sung by Elsa, is just as famous as the movie itself. As it is so globally well known, including the music, it is easy to cross boundaries. You do not need to speak English to recognize "Let It Go," nor do you need to have words to go through the plot of Frozen when performed on ice, as everyone who is watching it will already know the plot.³⁰ Even more beneficial, there is already a Russian dub of Frozen, so no matter where it is being performed, it can be accessible to whatever audience is watching it. Even more importantly, the skaters themselves do not do the singing or the speaking, and as such, they can be from all over the world to create that sort of performance. Of course, that is not to say that Frozen should be performed; however, it is proof of how accessible a shared interest of both the United States and Russia could be to translate onto an ice show. Thus even ground would be provided, and as such, a sense of unity.

Art by itself can be significant culturally. Frequently, a large part of one's cultural identity intertwines with the arts, whether they be visual or auditory. It is perhaps one of the reasons why in our growing global culture, music, movies, and theater have become more internationally influential as opposed to solely where the media originated from. That concept of globally recognizable art is fundamental when looking at something such as a figure skating show for two different countries at odds. As stated before, Russia and the United States are often viewed as opposites on many different spectrums such as politics, culture, language, and religion. Therefore, it would be most beneficial if the skating show, where it happens, has a shared interest between the two countries that are easily recognizable and accessible, and enjoyable to both potential audiences. Disney on Ice, of course, would be accessible to both parties. The problem lies in that none of the skaters who perform traditionally in Disney on Ice would be recognizable

³⁰ "Why Is Frozen so Popular? You Asked Google – Here's the Answer | Lucinda Everett." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 20 Dec. 2016,

to Russian and American audiences. For this idea to work at full potential, not only the actual show itself needs to be familiar to both audiences; however, the skaters who are in it need to be familiar as well. It would be particularly impactful to have figure skaters involved with the Olympics previously or big-name figure skaters that even non-figure skaters would be able to recognize.

Once again, taking a look at the question as to why figure skating, in particular, would be so effective as a means of a joint performance, opposed to something like ballet, is the flexible nature of skating itself. A Disney show can be transformed into a skating performance in ways that you do not see in other areas of art-based sports. Aside from that, figure skating is popular to watch in both the United States and Russia, and many figure skaters are common household names in both Russia and the United States. In fact, in the United States alone big named figure skaters, such as Johnny Weir, are known for becoming involved in hosting big-time television shows, such as the Westminster Dog Show, talk shows, and fashion shows. In Russia, popular and well-known figure skaters such as Evgenia Medvenva or Evgeni Plushenko continue to hold significance in Russian media. That is not to say that everyone in Russia or the United States are able to name a figure skater or know figure skaters well. Due to their interaction with more mainstream media, figure skaters are more likely to be household names than ballet dancers or similar performing artists.

Familiarity with those figures will mean that more people will likely watch the event and be seen with movies that feature well-known actors and actresses or are directed by a famous director. When someone is famous, people are more likely to want to become involved with whatever they are creating. It would not be wrong to thus suggest that figure skating, due to how many Olympic-level figure skaters have become household names through their involvement

outside of the sport, would be able to draw in more of an audience and create that unifying connection between Russia and the United States. It would be a shared cultural connection, and with famous skaters being the front of that coming together. As far as methods of creating relations between two estranged countries, a piece of art created by well-known people is an excellent way to go about it, similar to how popular crossovers are in Marvel movies or even novels. Even upon searching on google crossovers on television, you get search pages filled with top ten crossovers and the like. That is to say, people generally really enjoy the potential that comes with crossovers. Therefore to use famous figure skaters to create a crossover-like event for all to enjoy and watch likely would be a hit.

Chapter 5- Logistics of Skating Shows

It is important to note that the logistics of such a show would play a significant role in how successful and beneficial the show would be. Skating shows cost money, and a show such as this would take up a lot of time to put together. To add to the difficulty of putting together such an ambitious skating show, COVID-19 has made travel and close contact unsafe. For many, it is impossible to cross borders without weeks of prior isolation and or testing. Due to these restrictions, it is necessary to take a deep look at how such a show would function during COVID times versus how they would run during a time without COVID. Of course, it is all hypothetical, yet the difference in the functionality of such a show is regardless essential to bring into the conversation considering the current world situation. It is important to note in addition to the potential difficulties that COVID-19 presents currently, the opportunity to put together a show of this magnitude would be possible. I want to discuss what it would look like with current COVID-19 induced conditions, however I will also discuss how such a show functions normally without COVID.

As stated above, this skating show would require a great deal of time and collaboration to succeed. Many sports, due to COVID-19, have been put on hold unless they are contact sports such as hockey or football, and even then, there is a greater risk for the participants to get COVID-19. Usually, solo figure skating would not have as high of a risk, simply by the nature of skating alone. A show such as this would require prolonged interactions between skaters both on and off of the ice. Unsurprisingly, COVID makes everything quite different when it comes to a group performance on the ice. Naturally, if this were to happen during COVID times, it would be

unlikely that the skaters would safely perform together. However, that does not mean that the entire idea, therefore, is impossible due to the simple fact that solo skating does indeed work. Another important note to take a look at is that it is not impossible to create a show from a distance. To take a look at how this could work, we are going to take a look at the TikTok Musical *Ratatouille*.

As a preface, Tiktok is a social media platform that has dramatically risen in popularity since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is trendy amongst Millennials and Gen-Z, so those born between 1985-2010, give or take. The platform is for the sharing of short videos, around 60 seconds or less. Many tiktokers enjoy creating small stories using this format, showing off their talents in dancing, singing, voice acting, and other impressive feats. It is very similar to Vine, which was popular back in the 2010s. The Tiktok community naturally grew significantly at the start of the pandemic, as many people found that they had a great deal of time at home with little to do. With that, Tiktok saw all sorts of people, from high schoolers to celebrities like Gordon Ramsey, use the app as a form of connecting with other people despite the restrictions of COVID. It was here that the *Ratatouille* first began to take shape.

Ratatouille is a Disney/Pixar production that first came to theaters in June of 2007. Following the story of a rat named Remy who wished to become a chef, the movie quickly became a long-time favorite of children and adults alike. On IMBD, a website for reviews, it holds an 8.0/10 star review. Disney movies have been turned into musicals before, such as *Frozen* and *Aladdin*; however, *Ratatouille* was not one of those movies. Yet, the community of song creators, theater geeks, and furloughed Broadway performers on Tiktok came together and started to create music for what would eventually become the *Ratatouille* musical. "Beginning when one TikTok user Emily Jacobsen created a short comedic song in tribute to the main

character of the film, users then remixed and added to each other's videos to envision a full musical, including scenic design, choreography, and more songs."³¹ Individual creators came together and through the TikTok app created a full-blown musical, with original music, costuming, and dancing. It even aired for a few days online, and all of the money made off of the show was donated to the actors' fund to help actors who were out of work due to COVID. Some of those who participated in the show are prominent-name singers, such as Adam Lambert. The TikTok-created musical was a success and produced entirely safely and distanced. This, of course, was a considerable feat, and although it may seem silly, these tiktokers were able to create something that gained an immense following. The TikTok account dedicated to the musical has over 520 k followers, with over 5.1 million likes on their TikTok. It is important to note that this was all done without any actual advertisement other than on TikTok and the overall internet, yet 5 million people from just on TikTok alone followed and engaged with this project.

If anything, the *Ratatouille Musical* showcases that even during COVID times, art continues to thrive. There are ways around COVID, and it would not be unheard of to be able to picture a skating show which utilized some of the ideas that the TikTok community came up with in order to make the musical happen. Impressively as well, according to the *LA Times*, the musical managed to raise over 2 million dollars in COVID Relief funds, attributing to the fact that it drew a large audience despite being "The organization, which has ramped up its aid for the entertainment community after theaters went dark amid the pandemic, also revealed that the production drew approximately 350,000 viewers over its 72-hour run — "and one encore" performance — on TodayTix. Tickets for the charitable event started at \$5."³² What is so

³¹ "Ratatouille the Musical." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 7 Apr. 2021.

³² "Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical' Served up \$2 Million for COVID-19 Relief." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 12 Jan. 2021,

incredible about those numbers is the fact that the musical only aired for 72 hours, and yet the musical has already made an enormous impact with a large audience. Even those who did not watch the musical could still participate in the fun through the TikToks that were made on the app itself, allowing for even more people to get involved in this unique online event without restriction.

First and foremost, each of the skaters would likely perform solo. However, that does not mean that the program itself would feature only one of the skaters at a time. Piecing together the skaters in order to create a collage almost of the skaters, much like they did in the TikTok musical, would allow for a program to contain multiple people from all over the world, without any breach in COVID protocol. Using a platform like TikTok would also be beneficial as it would increase the interests of younger audiences as well, which is essential when looking at the long-term impacts that this show could potentially have. Of course, that is not ideal, as much of the thrill of a skating show comes from watching in person; however, it certainly would have its benefits to being online only. For one, it would be accessible to a far greater audience, particularly if it was shown both online and on television. The other benefit that would come with that is that it would remain online, meaning more people would access it over time with far greater ease than strictly an in-person performance. Many modern-day skating events are shown on the television anyways, and most of those who would watch it would want to watch it from the comfort of their homes.

On average, a typical skating competition costs thousands of dollars. Much of the finances would depend on the rink in which the show would take place, and it would depend upon whether or not the show would be strictly broadcasted or if there could be a live audience. It is likely, however, that whilst this event would be expensive to host, donations, as well as

ticket sales and merchandise, could easily cover the cost, mainly if widely watched. If shown on television, sponsors and ad revenue would be able to cover much of the initial costs of the show, meaning that neither the US nor Russia would have to worry too much about spending immense amounts of money on this. Though it is hard to pinpoint what the costs exactly would be, especially without taking into account the manner in which the performance would take place, it is essential to note that these large-scale skating events happen regardless of costs. Stars on Ice yet again shows that even with an in-person traveling show, it is possible to do. Below is a quick chart to show examples of the expenses that would be important to note, and on average in the United States, how much each one would cost.

Item	Cost
One hour of Ice Time	\$350 ³³
Single Hotel Room per night	\$200 ³⁴
Food Per day Per Person	\$100-\$500 ³⁵
Costuming	\$1,000-\$10,000 ³⁶
Broadcasted Advertisement	\$115,000 ³⁷

It is important to note that when looking at these costs, it is a broad estimate. When applied, the price tags can go up or down depending upon where the event occurs. For example, renting an hour of skate time differs from rink to rink, so therein it would greatly depend upon how much ice time was needed and what rink they would be utilized for such a show. Renting a

³³ "Buy Ice Time." *Rent My Rink*.

³⁴ Brackel, Christine. "A Week at the Olympics: What Would It Cost?" *Zing Blog by Quicken Loans*, 31 Jan. 2019.

³⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁶ Shannon-Karasik, Caroline. "Here's How Much Those Incredibly Detailed Figure Skating Costumes Cost." *Romper*, Romper, 8 Feb. 2018.

³⁷ Main, Kelly. "Everything You Need to Know About TV Advertising Costs." *Fit Small Business*, Fit Small Business, 22 Jan. 2021.

larger skating rink within a city would inherently cost more than renting a smaller local ice arena. For the purposes of this thesis, we are going with the idea that a larger and more expensive rink would be used to accommodate the Olympic figure skaters who would participate in this show. The same can be said for hotel and food costs, so those are broad estimates based on generalized prices to attend large sporting events for extended periods, such as the Olympics.

Another factor that is important to consider is how much practice time would be required for this show. On average, putting together a large-scale show takes a minimum of a month, with often more time being needed for the performance to be perfected. During my own time in figure skating competition, I competed in theater on ice. We spent over six months practicing for our competition, which made perfect sense since we were lower-level figure skaters. Regardless, it takes an immense amount of practice to get a performance and program ideally. If there are multiple, it would more than likely take several months for Olympic-level figure skaters to have the show performance-ready. As such, it would be essential to take a look at how to minimize costs in regards to practice time. Idealistically, the practice would be held individually at first, and eventually, they would be brought together a few weeks before the actual performance to practice together as a group. The one major benefit of this performance would be that these skaters are all the best in both the United States and Russia. As such, the time required to learn a new program would be significantly less than it would be for skaters without that extensive experience in learning new programs under high-stress conditions.

Without COVID-19 as a hurdle to overcome, putting on a skating show like this would be much more simplistic. The ability to have an audience would not only create more potential revenue through ticket sales (Stars on Ice Tickets can cost between 50-200 dollars depending upon the seat), but it would also give the skaters more opportunities to prepare and work together

on the ice for the show. Not only would this allow for more practice time on ice between the skaters, it would also allow the skaters themselves to bond more closely with each other through this experience. Of course it would be impactful to not only see the show, but for audiences in both the United States and Russia to see the bond between their skaters.

The price tag of such an event regardless is far less expensive than war. It is important to note that for all of the effort that would have to be put into such an event, all of it would improve relations between Russia and the United States. Politically we are in a dangerous situation right now, and not only would this potentially save money on war, but it would also save lives if we can avoid direct conflict. The price paid if relations continue to deteriorate would be far greater than a skating show. In that sense, price matters far less than the effect that this event could have on relations and should be far less of a concern when considering this as a potential course of action.

Chapter 6- Conclusion

The world is in the thick of unconventionality. The COVID-19 virus has changed everyone's life immensely, politically our world continues to shift and change, and technology has cemented its place within day-to-day life. In light of that, we have learned to become far more flexible than we had been previously. Classrooms have changed how they function, what we do and how we do it has changed to accommodate the virus, and above all, we have adapted to the times. Humanity is incredibly resilient in times of trouble. It goes without saying that these troubles that we face are not going to last forever. Yet, that also means that in the now, we must address these issues.

Within the United States and Russia, one of the biggest issues that we are facing is our political tensions. We are approaching a dangerous boiling point, and there is a genuine danger to what that could end up meaning. Utilizing a shared interest, such as I have suggested within this paper, is one of the ways that we will be able to slowly work towards improvement. Of course, a figure skating show will not magically solve the issues between the United States and Russia. What it does allow for, however, is a chance for the American people to see the Russian people in a positive light and vice versa. It provides an opportunity for our governments to show sportsmanship and the ability to work together as well, even if it is only on the ice for the time being.

Tackling these issues of politics is never easy, and there is no singular correct answer to turn to. We live in a world that is filled with inspiration and ingenuity, and in the face of such a complex problem, we need to use any and all resources possible to prevent the worst-case

scenario. There will be no end to the tension between the United States and Russia until our governments reach a point in which we are able to have fruitful conversations about the hard politics that we disagree on. It will take compromise, which at the moment is not on the table. Using a skating show, a pageantry event will give a little leeway for both nations to breathe and to take pride in something that they created together. Even if it does not reach our governments directly, the American public and Russian public would be able to share in the creation of such a show. There would be a sense of pride in our skating teams for being able to pull off a performance such as that. The public opinion, particularly in the United States matters; being able to use the strength of the public to ease our governments into addressing tensions would be invaluable to the attempt to defuse this situation. It is my hope that this concept is seriously considered so that our countries can see a future where we are able to work together without the fear of war and destruction.

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